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"Thunder all Around":
Letters of Emily Wiley

Jan Weldin

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Dr. K.K. Collins
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**"Thunder All Around":
Letters of Emily Wiley**

Introduction

In 1966, in the basement of a house we were renting in Makanda, Illinois, my mother found a large cracker tin filled with old letters and documents. I was twelve, and only minimally interested in this find. I remember my mother's amazement and delight, however, when she discovered that the box contained mostly Civil War letters written between Benjamin L. Wiley, a Union lieutenant, and his wife, Emily, who was living in Makanda with their children while Ben was at war.

My mother read a few of the letters, then took the box across the street to our landlady, Leslie Rosson. I remember my mother's being puzzled by Leslie's response to the letters. Leslie announced that she was a granddaughter of Ben and Emily; Benjamin L. Wiley, Jr. ("Beny" in Emily's letters) was her father. She did not seem to know how the letters came to be collected and hidden in a corner of our basement, yet neither did she seem surprised that my mother found them there. Though Leslie's home was laden with family heirlooms, she had little, if any, interest in the letters. From among the papers in the box, Leslie took only a land deed, and told my mother to "hang on to" the letters. My mother and Leslie were accustomed to taking tea together on occasional afternoons, and would often discuss local history; perhaps Leslie felt that my mother's avid interest in literature, history and biography would make her a trustworthy keeper of this family treasure. Whatever the

motive, she left the letters in my mother's keeping. Several times over the next few years my mother mentioned the letters to Leslie, and once again carried them across the street to her; Leslie repeatedly told my mother to keep them.

When Leslie died in 1980, the letters were still in my mother's hands--hers, legally, by right of possession. Her reason for keeping them at this point was twofold. There were, and are, so many living descendants of Ben and Emily Wiley that she did not know who should receive the letters. Furthermore, her interest in Ben and Emily had grown; she did not want to part with the story captured in the faded ink and delicate paper of the correspondence. Only recently did my mother decide to part with the letters, and to entrust them to the John A. Logan Museum and Interpretive Center in Murphysboro, Illinois. The letters are in my hands briefly, for purposes of transcription and compilation, and will soon be formally donated to the Logan Museum.

The Wiley letters in my possession are dated from March 1862 through April 1864. Ben's letters are written home from Helena, Arkansas and, later, near Vicksburg; "Here I am at this famous place on the Yazoo River" he writes (6/20/1863). Ben's letters are filled with militaristic detail and advice on the domestic affairs Emily is managing back home. He closes his letters with the warm formality of his era. "My candle burns low," he writes. "Kiss the babies for me." Ben's letters might be seen as historically more significant than Emily's-- Civil

War place names, names of generals, and details of military maneuvers fill his news home. The content of Ben's letters is compelling. As I began transcription, however, I found myself drawn to Emily's letters as an intimate and heart-felt account of a woman's life during the Civil War. They are marked by vulnerability, fearfulness, loneliness, strength, heart, and humor. Though fragmentary because of missing letters and some connective details, and because of the nature of correspondence, itself, the record set down in Emily's colloquial voice stands on its own. I so present it here.

The following historical and personal information may present a useful context for the letters. According to local historical accounts, Emily Davie was born March 6, 1830, the firstborn child of Anna and Winstead Davie. Emily's father occupies a significant position in the history of Union County, Illinois. Among other endeavors, he founded the town of Anna, named for Emily's mother. Emily married Ben Wiley on December 5, 1850, and they moved from Jonesboro to Makanda. The house the Wileys occupied during the 1860s was the very house in which Leslie Rosson lived in 1968; this house, an unobtrusive structure obscured by trees and shrubbery, still stands at the southeast corner of the intersection of New Route 51 and the "Makanda Blacktop" road, approximately eight miles south of Carbondale.

Ben Wiley is credited with beginning the fruit orchard industry in Southern Illinois. An 1878 biographical sketch of

him states:

Mr. and Mrs. Wiley now own 1800 acres of land, about 600 of which is in a high state of cultivation, with an orchard of 400 trees on it, from which he gets a good regular income (102).

This was mostly land endowed to Emily by her father, and is the same land she is tending when she writes to Ben about planting and harvesting apples and wheat and oats, or when she sends him accounts of the weather and the hiring of workers. With Ben away, Emily faces many difficult decisions and circumstances. In addition to the daunting responsibility of managing the land and crops, she also bears the brunt of financial concerns while taking care of their four children, giving birth to a fifth in 1863. Regular and frequent bouts with various common illnesses assail the household and community, and an eye infection leaves their oldest child, Willie, with severe and permanent vision impairment. Emily's multiple concerns extend to the war itself, of course, and not only to her husband's part in it:

I wish they could only whip all of them and I would not care how soon, so you could all get to come home and stay there but I am afraid that before this rebellion is put down there will be a great many innocent lives lost and a great deal of blood shed (4/19/1863)

She keeps abreast of current happenings through newspapers and word of mouth; she follows the progress of the Union Army, and worries that Cape Girardeau, Missouri, and then Illinois, will be taken by the Rebels. As Southern Illinoisians were themselves divided in loyalty between the Northern and Southern

forces, Emily is in the midst of dissension and civil violence. "I am afraid that there will be some disturbance down there before long if not in our own neighbourhood," she writes. "Some say that Jef Davis will reign over us before three months but I dont believe it yet." Perhaps the most touching aspect of Emily's letters is the loneliness that pervades her letters:

went by Mrs. Millers[. . .] came back the other way it seemed very lonely to me could not help thinking of the times that you and I went along there last fall and how pleasant they wer. I got pretty tired (or tired without the pretty) I have an apple in my pocket dont you want one If I could give you one you should have it (3/1/1863)

Ben came home from the war in 1865. According to a biographical sketch in an 1878 History of Jackson County, he resigned from service after the seige of Vicksburg, disabled by rheumatism, and was then reinstated as an enrolling commissioner in Cairo, Illinois (102). By another account, Ben was dishonorably discharged because the government could not locate the documentation he submitted for resignation before returning home in June of 1863--he went home because of Willie's visual impairment as well as his own debilitation. His case was later reopened and he was reinstated as Commissioner of the Board of Enrollment until honorably discharged May 5, 1865 (Kohl, 68-70).

Emily Wiley's husband, like her father, was a prominent and respected citizen whose accomplishments are recorded in local historical accounts. Emily is mentioned only as Ben's wife, as the oldest daughter of Winstead Davie.

A Note on the Text

I have tried to keep the transcribed version of Emily Wiley's letters true to their original form. She uses almost no punctuation, and I have chosen to insert extra space between her ideas rather than to punctuate them as sentences, except in those instances where she does use punctuation. Emily often underlines words or phrases for emphasis, and I have included these underlinings. I have also reproduced occasional and uniform misspellings that occur in her charming usage of the language; weather, for example, is written as wheather; yesterday as yesturday; maybe as maby; were as wer; hundred as hundread; extra as extry....

Interestingly, Emily spells her children's names in a variety of ways. For the sake of clarity, I have generally used the spelling she most commonly gives for each child. Below is a list of the Wiley children and their birthdates. Each name is followed by the spelling Emily uses when referring to that child.

10/22/1851	William Winstead	Willie
8/10/1854	John Arthur	Johny
2/11/1857	Anna Rebecca	Anna Becca
10/19/1859	Benjamin Ladd, Jr.	Beny
7/10/1863	Daniel Davie	Dannie

After the war, Emily and Ben had four more children: Charles Higgins, Mary Emily, Henry Kingsbury and James Willard.

The names of various neighbors and relatives are mentioned throughout the letters. "Nany" is probably Emily's younger sister, Nancy Davie. I have not been able to identify "Tilly."

Makanda Illi
March 16th 1862

My Dear Husband

I received your letter from Pilot Knob yesturday and I was very glad to hear from you again I should like to hear from you oftener but am afraid in the future I will not get them so often as you said they would have to go apart of the way by waggons you also say that you are now in the enemys country I do hope you will take good care of your self and not run into danger when it is not necessary but do not shrink from your duty I hope you will make for your self a good name that will last you through life wheather it be short or long Oh I tell you I do think of you often both night and day if it would only do you any good and will think of you yet oftener now you are getting in danger keep good courage dear husband and if you get sick or hurt if you can not write yourself get some of your friends to write to me but I am in great hopes that you will not get so but you can write yourself You said it was very warm when you wrote it was warm here also but is cooler now Wont you be provided with summer clothing if not I know you will suffer this summer especially if you go father south than this. do you take your contrabands with you! hope you have so you wont have to do that kind of work Alex is going down to Anna to day and if your ambrotype is there he is going to bring it up to me Father told me to write you if you sent me any more money not to put your name or mine on the back for some of the people were very uneasy about it Shick amongst the others he says he has paid out several hundread dollars for you and says he thinks it can be maid out of farm above the 1000 he also wanted to know if the deed was made in my name or yours the above is what he said when he found out it was in yours he did not say so to me but to Father I asked him for the tax receipts said he had turned them all over to Dresser he did not know exactly where they were but would hunt them when he had time I heard it reported yesterday that the rebels had evacuated island No 10 also New Madrid what do they mean by quitting all there strong holds! Maby they intend falling back and engageing some of our troops where they are not fortafied or cannot get reinforcements as our troops will be in Arkansas and Texas try and keep posted about there movements as they will take the advantage of you if they can I should think that our troops occupying Columbus and Manassas would be a blow on them that they could not recover soon and I hope never will. I noticed in yesterdays papers that there was some rebels in Illinois yet they were trying to take advantage of the absence of our 65000 men and elect representatives to state convention, guess they wont come it. Nany¹ came up yesterday the first time since last Nov she and the boys are playing

1. Probably Emily's younger sister, Nancy Davie.

checkers Mr. Wilson has engaged to take puss¹ at 35\$
Alex sold her to him and is to collect the money and keep it on
his wages I am going to send this down so it will get mailed
and get there before Col Wilson leaves so he can take it to you
I will leave this other page so if you need the paper you can
have it good by and God Bless and take care of you
your wife E Wiley

{Note written in left margin of first page}
Think I shall write to Wm Edwards to day and send him those
notes Where does GY McClure live and where does the man live
that the note is on he has got

1. Seems to refer to a large animal such as a cow or horse.

Makanda Illi
March 21st 1862

My Dear Husband

I wrote you a few lines the other day in Tillys letter hope you got them as I told you in that Nany and I went over to Mrs. Hunters found her up and around helping to do the work as we came back N horse stumbled as we came down the hill the other side of Makanda and turned heels over head and then roaled over and threw Nany clear out of reach of her heels which was lucky for her she was not hurt only jarred but I can tell you I was scared for the horse looked like she was going right over on her. when we got home found Tilly sick and in bed had had a chill and considerable fever made a fire in bedroom fixed her some water for bathing she took a bath felt better had no fever next day but felt weak and lay down part of time is well now and takes her allowance had some sorethroat. That night after we got back Nany was taken with a headache and hot fever lasted all night next day and part of next night her throat rise and broak on inside she felt better next morning and is nearly well now she is helping me some now her throat hurts her some yet if the weather is suitable she will go home tomorrow It has been trying to rain and snow boath this morning we are haveing a very backward spring have done no plowing yet although some of the neighbours have done a little I put out a few rows of onions and one row of radishes yesturday ground pretty wet our wheat over here looks beautifull and this other field is improving there were four refugees from New Orleans called here this morning for breakfast I gave them all they wanted and some bread in pockets for there dinner they were going to St. Louis they were on Southern gun boats and seemed very thankfull for breakfast the children are all very well and kiss me for you nearly every night and very often speak of pa I had a long talk with you last night thought you were home but when I woke found I was disappointed hope it may be reality before many more months I think we are gaining ground fast and will conquer in the last Alex is starting to station I will have to quit this time but will write often write every opportunity you have I would not care if it was every day so much the better so good by and God bless and take care of you in your privations good by dear husband
E Wiley

have you been in any skirmishing yet be carefull when you get out for reb will not spare you if they can help it dont by there poisoned pies and victuals have not got your pictures yet where did you send them E

Makanda Illi
March 30 1862

Dear Husband

This is a beautiful Sunday morning Oh how I wish you was here so we could take a walk aroun over the fields and see the wheat this in north field is nice that in old field is looking better dont you wish you were here some time! I could cry real hard if it would do any good have to do a little of it any way some times when I get where no one can see me I just eat an apple named it for you guess you think me silly some times from the way I write but cant help it it is just the way I feel I must stop it and hope you will pardon me. I got your letter of the 25th on yesturday I did not forget that it was your birthday told the children that it was pas birthday I was glad that you were still in good health I had heard from you the day before Mr Crawford stopped at the bars and told me he had saw a man that left your camp on Monday I forget the mans name he lives north of here. you said that you were still going farther south do you think that you can stand it when warm weather comes on! you know how you always suffer up here. Our apples keep very well this year we have a few bushels yet wish you had apart of them but you say you have plenty of dried fruit and other things and your old cook to do them up. is that your Uncle as Till calls him! she seems to have gained a great deal of information while with you at Springfield I just tell you it goes all over me when ever I think about you writing for her to come to see you and if she did not have the means you would send them to her. And father and Daniel both offered me the means and I got ready and you would not let me come. Cant write any more now.

I have just been looking yesturdays paper over and think from the preperation that the President is making for iron vessels and boats that the war will not be ended as soon as I expected but hope it will be pushed through as soon as possable for it makes a lonely home as well as mine Tilly and Johny have just come back from taking a ride Johny is talking a good deal about it telling what he saw and how far they went Tilly has to keep telling him to hush or they cant get the horses again he clatters away thinks there is no danger he says if he could write he would write you a letter Willie has come home from church and is going to finish his letter he worked real hard yesturday and was tired at night and so was I Johny and Anna worked some too Beny was running every where yesturday but is not very well to day is asleep now think it is cold that is the matter with him Think some of the peach trees will be in bloom in a few days the buds on all the things are swelling and some are bursting it looks this time like spring was coming in earnest I have been hunting the map (have to do that a good deal lately and then cant find all the places) and find Pocahuntas in Randolph Co and on the river

you say you expect to get your supplies by the way of the river after our boats get down there are you certain of there success I do hope they will get clear down to New Orleans but I noticed in one of the papers the other day that the rebels had had 8 or 10 gunboats finished at New Orleans and ready to start to No 10¹ I saw that one of our officers done a daring feat the other day by spiking the gun of the rebs on copper battery. how long do you think this war will last! I hope it will soon be finished so you can come home. and peace once more in our country Mrs. Parmly died last week had a congestive chill heard that Gallup was mending slowly dont know any news to write I write so often expect you get tired of them so often if so let me know and wont write quite so often do hope you will write as often as you can for I am glad to hear as often as I can from you so with my best wishes and love

I remain as ever yours truly Emily Wiley

1. An island in the Mississippi River, near the Kentucky border.

Sunday Feb 30th 1862

Dear father

I seat my self to write you a few lines we are all well at present I was down at Jonesboro last sunday My school was out last friday the teacher treated us to candy and raisins there was about 45 scholars and 5 or 6 women there the last day friday Alex plowed some ground for potatoes and yesterday Ma and Johny and I planted them last week I dug a hole in the garden 18 inches deep for a spargras bed and put all the old boots and bones and chips and manurer and then filled up the rest with dirt and what dirt was left Ma put in the wheelbarow and I wheeled it out and put it on the mound after I got through Johny and me went down to Makanda Johny took down some eggs and I took down some buter I have just come back from church Johny and Till have just got back from taking a ride. The other night the people all went to church and the preacher didnt come Beny dont feel very well this morning I heard him crying a while ago I heard Beny crying for ma to take him down to see Aunt Margs baby and when he found out that she wouldnt do it he wanted to see pa Alex has been gone about two nights out of every week to balls the thermomoter stands at 69 in the shade and 74 in the sun Johny has got him a bow and arow a going around trying to shoot birds I dont believe he has killed any bird yet Jane miller and Lou Piquet was married last week at two oclock pm Beny has woke up and feels a heap beter now you must write as soon as you get this and let me know how you are yours truly goodbye from your son Willie

to his father

This is Willies letter but I believe I wrote the most when you answer it send one to him

This is the last day of March yesturday after I had finished writing I went over where you made the nursery last spring to see if any of the trees were alive after all of your hard labor and sweating there is only a few alive I remember just how you looked while over there planting and making the holes for them As I came back Thomas Utley came up he staid all night and went home this morning he and I made a bargain for him to move up here and take charge of things for a while he is to let me know friday wheather he comes or not If he comes he is to bring one horse & two cows I am to furnish feed for them for taking care of mine. untill the crops come in he is to have half of what he raises and 15\$ per month for what time he works extry for me what do you think of it write and let me know if there is any amendments to make in bargain if he does come I will let you know Grandpa named it to him while he was in Vienna and he came up to see me about it. Shearer was over this morning thinks he will be over day after tomorrow to work his tools had not come up from Mound City yet think they will be here by tomorrow he said he hauled a box of thing out for Mrs. Elliott from station they were from Sanders the teacher he was at No 10 they were secesh trophies was not worth a \$ had 50 express a letter also from her husband¹ he is [I] believe at No 10 dont you think she has a heap of strings to her apron Alex is sowing some oats this morn Tilly is washing I have been working around and have to go at it again when I quit this The boys have been making a bow we are all well this morning and hope you are good by I hope God will bless and take care of you always yours truly always

1. Best reading of an unclear passage.

Makanda Illi
Apr 11th 1862

My Dear husband

I wrote you last monday and would have wrote yesturday but was inhopes I would get a letter from you before I wrote again Tilly wrote you on Wednesday expect she gave you all the news then I saw by Wednesdays paper that there were some 35,000 rebels at or near Pocahuntas and I have been uneasy about you ever since for I think you must be there by this time the rebels are under the command of Gen Van Dorn looked yesturdays paper all over but could see nothing from that quarter but we have good news from other parts evacuation of No 10 and Corinth we have not yet got any of the particulars from Corinth but say we routed them with heavy loss on both sides wish it had been a complete route so they could never make another stand wish they would get all there big generals and send to Hallefax or some other place so they could not get back McLellan has also commenced doing something I think it is going to be as he said sometime ago when it commences to thunder it will thunder all around I should think it had commenced from the last accounts but I do hope you will be spaired from injurey and permitted when it is over to join us once more but His will be done and we will have to abide by it expect that Tilly told you that Thomas was sick the last we heard from him Will had been sick but was better dont know what has become of them since the fight I have not heard from the folks at Anna since I last wrote you Tilly is talking about going down this afternoon on Bally and comeing up Monday Willie is down there if she goes down he will wride the horse up that Father is going to lend us I run all around the neighbourhood yesturday hunting a man found John Coleman he is plowing to day for oats there is about one days plowing had Mr. Slater engaged to come two mornings and he disappointed me this is the first work that has been done since this day week ago, except what the little boys could do they took the oxen one day and hauled up a little wood and then finished hauling in the rest of hay they were both very tired that night next forenoon Willie saved me a lot of stove wood and in afternoon I let him go down to Anna I had promised him for some time whenever the school was out he should go down and stay awhile Johny and Anna have gone out to gather me a mess of greens Beny is standing here gabbleing a way he still talks about his Pa and so does the rest of them Alex is so he can go around and attend to the feeding dont know how long it will be before he can go to work This little cherry tree out here before the door has a good many blooms on it, it is the one on the left hand of door our peach trees are all in bloom looks like there was going to be a great many peaches do wish you would get through against they get rife and bee at home I have some peas, beets, onions radishes and lettuce up only a few of each for it has been so cold for a week past

have not put in near all of any seeds Is that big garden at Jonesboro ours or is it some personelses if ours let me know and I will try and rent it for something Mr Shepperd rented over there where the hungarian was last year he is to give me twelve bushels to acre the way things are going on did not think I would get it put in they do not go as well as when they had a boss Mr Wilson took puss last tuesday at 35,00 he gave Alex an order on Mr Lirely and Alex gave me a receipt so that much more is paid he gave me an order of 34,75 18 cts on Mr Lirely for his board there was that much left after taking his work out for trimming apple trees there was about a half days trimming that he did not get done but he was in a great hurry. It is all cloudy and my feet is right cold just sitting here by the table. If you think of anything that you want done let me know but dont expect you have much time to think of the things here for I am afraid you have your heart and hands both full to attend to your regiment where you now are I will bring these scattered remarks to a close hoping to get a letter this afternoon when I send this down with my love and best wishes for your safety I remain your affectionate wife

Emily Wiley

To Mr. BL Wiley

PS write as often as you have a chance if it is only a line or two

Makanda Ills
July 6th 18 62?

Dear Husband

I got yours of 23 last Monday answered it next day but have been so busy this week that I neglected to write untill now, Was sorry to hear that you had had the rheumatism Pa if you could have got a cot why did you not at first and not endanger your health if there is anything you can get for your own comfort I want you to get it for your comforts must be few my paper of the first says Gen Curtis has only 10 days half rations and will have to fight out of Arkansas the boats that wer ladened with provisions had to return the water was so low If I could only send you of our plenty how gladly I would do it but I scarcely expect that you will get this letter I do not get all of yours you spoke of one of 31st of May with drape also one wrote a few days before the last that did not come to hand Our news also at Richmon is bad McLellan having been beaten back 17 miles from Richmon our loss from 12, to 15,000 men The president calls for 300,000 more men think his call will be responded to promptly although I hoped this war would soon be over for I want to see you so bad and have you here at home with us. The heat must be great where you are (it is very warm here now) and you must suffer with that as well as with hunger You are often thought of when we are cooking and eating so much here and such nice apples we have now if you could only get a few bushels of them they would be so good to you and if there is any sick in your regiment how they would relish them Have to stop and help get the cows out of field it has taken about half of my time for the last week to run the cow and hogs out of fields am going to have them to commence stacking my wheat in morning so that it will not all be eat up must have my oats cut this week they are rusting so bad the corn must be plowed and sugar cane worked if they can find it for the grass it will not make half crop for could not get it worked when it ought to have been I have four men engaged to commence work tomorrow Alex is getting so he can see to get around the house and yard Johnys eyes were a good deal better yesturday¹ they did not pain him any but to day they are paining him some yesturday when he first would get done bathing them he could see a little if it was not in to light a place they matter a great deal I never saw the like, The children are all a sleep and are well except Johny with his eyes Willie was telling him this morning that he could beet him playing checkers he told Willie that he could beet him playing blindfold and I think he could for he has been blinded for more than a week but is very patient for a child Tilly is on back porch reading Alex and Watch on front porch

1. Johny suffered permanent minor impairment from this infection.

whenever he sits down Watch¹ is up on him at play stays right with him

I shipped 6 large and 11 small boxes of apples last week have not heard from them yet we gathered apples yesturday and this morning packed 21 small boxes & 1 bhl last night I want to send them to station in morning if can get them up soon enough for train think will ship them by freight it costs so much by express do wish you was here help us with them or to oversee it at any rate for it is entirely new business with me and I may fail to do it as it should be done I have them to mark yet this evening

The glorious old fourth is done and gone how did you enjoy it I did not very pleasantly but guess Tilly & Willie did they were with all the rest of Sunday School at Pleasant Grove but I will leave that for them to write about, The birds are singing the sun is almost down Anna has just give me a good night kiss for pa and gone to bed. Willie has gone after his cow feed little Beny is a sleep pretty good boy but pretty stubborn some times when the mule begins to pull back had an instance of it just before he went to sleep he is broke out very bad with sores and has been some time I believe that is our program to day, dont know any news, or much that is going on in neighbourhood have not heard from home since I wrote you got a letter from Hialmer yesturday he was inquiring very particular about your whereabouts he is well and is near Corinth Miss Tilly got a letter the other day from Thomas he was well and said he was comeing up to spend the fourth here if he could get a furlow but he did not come my pen cannot describe my feelings for you but may God guard and protect you and the rest of your soldiers through your trials is my prayer

affectionately yours
Emily Wiley

PS if you get this wish you would write as often as you can for I always like to hear from you and it is a long time between times sometimes you may considered yourself kiss by the babies and myself EW

1. A dog.

Alexandra Ellis

Aug 9th 1861

My Dear Husband

I just received a letter from Mary Ann she was in at Mother's she says Willie can see the sheet now (when he washes his eye out, he goes under mother's bed where it is dark) the sheet hangs over the side of bed he could not see that much a week ago I think I shall go down again tomorrow to see them that is if Benny is well enough he has some fever this afternoon and does not feel very well I think he has eat too much fruit we have been working in it this week we have dried two bushels of apples and now have some peaches undergoing our dry house does fine it is so much better than drying in the sun

Alex came back this morning he is getting recruits he is going back in morning he is as big as ever I know that you must suffer with the heat for it is very warm here this afternoon They are having another hard fight at Lexington Mo They are trying to cut the water off from our troops hope we will whip them all to pieces for they are getting so bold of late in Mo and Kentucky do hurry and whip them good so they cant get into Ills I dont want them here for there will not be many men left after they get through drafting hope this will find you well, I will write again in a few days and let you know how your little boys are getting with my love to you as ever and Wm

Makanda Ills
Aug 22nd 1862

My Dear Husband

I just received a letter from Mary Ann she was in at mothers she says Willie can see the sheet move (when he washes his eyes out he goes under mothers bed where it is dark) the sheet hangs over the side of bed he could not see that much a week ago Think I shall go down again tomorrow to see them that is if Benny is well enough he has some fever this afternoon and does not feel very well think he has eat to much fruit we have been working in it this week we have dried two bu & 1/2 of apples and now have some peaches in drying our dry house does fine it is so much better than drying in the sun

Alex came back this morning he is getting recruits he is going back in morning he is as big as ever I know that you must suffer with the heat for it is very warm here this afternoon They are haveing another hard fight at Lexington MO they are trying to cut the watter off from our troops hope we will whip them all to peaces for they are getting so bold of late in Mo and Kentucky do hurry and whip them good so they cant get into Ills I dont want them here for there will not be may [many] men left after they get through drafting hope this will find you well, I will write again in a few days and let you know how our little boys are getting with my love to you
as ever yours E. Wiley

Makanda Ills
Aug 26th 1862

My Dear Husband

I was anxiously looking for a letter to day but was again disappointed but hope to soon get one I went down to town again Sat as I wrote you was going to do The little boys wanted to come home so bad that brought them am afraid that it has done Willie no good got his eye open this evening so could see it there is something covering nearly all the sight of his right eye the left one could not get to see he can see his hand moove when he is in the shaded place about the same as when I last wrote. he is now complaining considerable of his head do wish you was here to tell me how to manage the little fellows and what to do for them I stopped at Dr. McVicers¹ Sunday as came home he looked at them he said that he thought that his sight was not gone but that one eye would never bee as it had been he told me to rub Iodine on there foreheads to help to absorb those spots Johny is running everywhere If Willie keeps going back I shall take him back to Dr. in few days Dr. McClure² is not able to attend to them he was sitting up on the sofa when I was in but could not speak aloud Beny and Bec³ are well Father & Mother went down to Anna this morning and Bec went with them think it is a little doubtful wheather they stay with me this winter He is not very well think he has worked to hard since he has been here he saw so much that was kneding doing he told Till as they went to Station that they would have taken three trunks if I had had anyone to have drove them. Tomy Spence is comeing tomorrow to haul wheat to Station for me it is little damp am afraid it will heat this warm weather. Silas said he would give 85 cts bu take that to keep it from spoiling Mr. Herald was here this evening he bought Johny and Hamelton['s] share in this land across the road he took it on a debt he wants to sell it again there is sixteen acres of it he told me to tell you that you could have it for 200 dollars (two hundred dollars) he wants an answer immediately for maby he will go into the army and his wife is going east write as soon as you get this and let me know what to do the other shares was sold for taxes the other day Mr. Bristol bought them (or paid taxes) it was twenty two \$ dont fail to write me as soon as you get this Got a lot of this paper and can scarcely write on it It has been very warm here for a few days past how can you stand it down there know you must suffer do you have to wair those heavy clothes through the warm weather

Mr Overman stopped in here this afternoon had stopped at South pass on his way up heard there that Capt Evins had been

1. Best reading; text obscured by ink spill.
2. Best reading.
3. Anna Becca

shot at a few nights before while in bed but was not hurt.
Some guerrilla crossed over the river a few miles above Mound
City the other day and done some mischief but do not know what.
Oh this war how soon it may come to a close. wish it may be
soon. all the folks abed so good night you may consider
yourself to have a good night kiss from the all the little boys
and a half dozen from me may God bless and take care of you
yours truly your wife Emily Wiley

PS went to get envelope and upset ink
Willie feels better this morning the man has come to haul
to day it looks like rain

Makanda Ills
Aug 31st 1862

My Dear Husband

I am quite anxious to hear from you hope you are still getting better. Have been looking ever since I got your last for him. hopeing to hear more particular from you But now have almost given him out as the time for recruiting is past I wish it had been so you could have come and done the recruiting yourself you do not know how I long for the time for you to come home Beny got your Ambrotype out this morning and kissed it then made me kiss it he says pa is a soldier Johny says he wishes Bob would come and then we could hear all about Pa and about the battles he has been in he thought you had been in battles Anna Bec is still at her Grandmas have not heard from her since she went down. My little boy went home yesterday and is to come back to day. I told him to go up to Mothers. then can hear from there she is to come home the first time any of them come up I will also get word what to do for Willie as sent word to the Dr. Willie had quite a hard spell of headaches this afternoon but he got to sleep and when he woke up it was easy and he feels quite well now his sight is about the same as when I last wrote I think the trip home was almost to much for him. if he would only get so he could see to get around it has been 8 weeks to day since he took them sore eyes and next morning they was so swollen that he could not see and has not since the swelling has all been gone for two weeks and they have not pained him three weeks, untill this week one of them hurts when his head aches he says he thinks they will not hurt any more to day if he does not eat any thinks it will get better now as this is the first day that it has quit untill after he went to bed for the night I went out this morning and got some small sweet potatoes for dinner it is the first we have had I should like to see you very much but would rather hate for you to see the way¹ I have farmed it this year for what the hogs did not eat up the grass has nearly run away with But think if I have to farm another year without you. will try and do better that is if can get help I am so lazy or do not feel able to take hold of the hardest of it. Tilly Edmon and I went out the other day to get a load of wood Tilly and Edmon was to load up while I held the oxen they got on three of those long sticks and getting the next one they got in a bumblebees nest and if there wasnt some scratching and running some of them got on Luke he kicked and tried to run but him and I hurried off with the waggon as fast as we could there was not much harm done except not getting our wood if we dont get a man in a few days we will have to by it again We are drying apples and peaches and am going to try and make some cider tomorrow and then some apple butter if we can get the kettle Get Mr

1. Best reading.

Upton to make us a kind of a press for apples That row of apple trees next [to] the Rhode Island greenings is breaking down with apples am going to pull some of them off and make cider out of them the little romanites are very full and begin to look read[y] have not any ground plowed yet for wheat dont hardly know where to put the wheat have been wanting Daniel to come up and tell me but he has so much to do and scarcely any help that he has not come yet Bell Hillard wants to get the school this winter for herself and Tilly she stopped in the other day to see if Till would help if she would get the school she told her yes Tilly does not think there is any chance for her to get it Bell says she will not go to see Mr Hagler but is going to the other directors There is a man at Makanda that is very bad with the smallpox he came from Memphis he first stopped at Mr. Burnses he is now in a shanty this side of railroad Hunter gives him his medicine

Oh Pa what do you think of this war when will it be over it is nearly a year now since you left it seems a long time as it is Think Pope is going to do something that will do more good than all McLellan had done I trust this may find you well again if it does not try and come home untill you get well write to me often Pa with good night kisses from the little ones every night and thoughts from me yours truly

Emily Wiley

mus go and feed for my boy has not yet come and it is nearly night

Sept 1

good morning a nice morning had a very heavy rain last night which was very much needed Willie rested very well last night and feels very well this morning the rest are well and hope this may find you as well as it leaves me

Yours truly EW

Makanda Ills
March 1st 1863

My Dear Husband

I received your welcome letter yesturday and was glad to hear that you got there safe and was well, for I began to feel a little uneasy about you. This is a beautiful morning looking like spring was comeing in earnest. the sun is shineing and the birds wer all ready singing in the trees when Johny and I was milking this morning. if this weather will continue a few days the ground will be dry enough to have the apple trees worked. The men wer makeing the fence above the spring yesturday. nearly finished it. have to make it two more rails high. They have been sprouting orchard and cleaning up side hill. Hastings has got able to go to work again, Had the meat peppered and hung and am smokeing it. The Colt and Julia are both better. They all seem to be enjoying this pleasant day. Willy is making Johny a little waggon. Hastings is making Anna one. they are all out in the yard. Benny is a sleep. think Mr Maxfield is also. heard him gaping and go in his room. Emmy has gone home. Tilly has not got back and I am writing these few lines to you. this is the way we all put in our time. Maxfield went to station yesturday to see if they had the lumber sawed. it is to be done this week. while down there he heard that there was to be a meeting of all the officers that is at Memphis and [that they will] have a vote wheather they wer to lay down arms and come home or wheather they should fight. the majority was to rule. Guess it is rebel news or there simpathizers. Have you heard any thing of it! I went over to Mrs McNeirs the other day to twist some yarn. went by Mrs. Millers. found her some better sitting up but complaining a good deal with her eyes. came back the other way. it seemed very lonely to me. could not help thinking of the times that you and I went along there last fall and how pleasant they wer. I got pretty tired and rested a couple of times (or tired without the pretty). I have an apple in my pocket. dont you want one. If I could give you one you should have it. Oh how did you get along with your box. did it bust open before you got there. I should have put you in a lot of apples but you told me not to and was afraid that you would not like it if I did. Hope there will not be any trouble with your case¹. should like it very much if you could be at home but if it desides otherwise will be content knowing that you will do the best you can for your country while there. If you do get in a battle and get sick, wounded, or killed let me know immediately and I will come to you if it is so I can. But I do hope and trust in God that none of those misfortunes will happen to you dear one. But it will not be impossable. Keep right, your bible and God on your side and hope that all will

1. Regarding undocumented leave.

come out right I got a letter from Willie the other day he seems to feel lonely. Was glad that you wer going to write him wish you would do so as often as you can when I answered his [I] told him that I thought I should come up week after this but will not start untill I hear from you again. if your mony does not reach me by that time will try and get enough of Daniel of that I loned him

What made the Col resign if you stay will you take his place. Have you many troops at Helena now Have not heard from Jonesboro since I left do not know what is going on in that old town. Here is Willies letter and another one that has come. Keep Willies if you can I found that letter of the boys that I wrote you about in my last letter it was in your day book where you wer setting down there accounts I must quit not haveing any more to write at this time hopeing this may find you well. May God bless and take care of you always

Sincerely yours Emily Wiley

write me as often as you can

Makanda Ills
March 8th 1863

My Dear Husband

I received yours of the 28th Feb the same evening that I mailed my last to you. Haveing nothing of importance to write, I have put it off untill evening. The day has been very cloudy and dull and so have I been a sleep once or twice¹. Anna was sick the last day I wrote you and kept her bed one day but has been up since and is well with the exception of a cold. The rest of us are well. have not heard from Willie since wrote². I am thinking of going to Jonesboro tomorrow and see Daniel. I cant recollect wheather you told me to pay taxes down there in March or May. will find out when the redemption of those lots runs out. The time for paying taxes at Carbondale is 10th of this month. will try and get money enough while down to pay Jackson county taxes and go to St. Louis. the time seems long. I want to know more about Willie. He writes very short letters and does not give many particulars how he is getting along. When I go down shall take Becca along and leave her at mothers while I am gone. she is so subject to sick spells and mother will know better how to take care of her. Beny begs very hard to go along but Tilly wants him to stay with her. he says he will have no one to sleep with him. dont know hardly how to refuse him he is such a good little fellow. he comes every day and says ma me loves you and kisses me and sometimes says here is a kiss for Pa always at night. I am afraid that there will be some disturbance down there before long if not in our own neighbourhood. There is a large canon there and they are expecting two Regiments of soldiers there to take up the deserters in the southern part of this state of which it is said that there is about 1,000 and that there will be warm work before they get some of them. Some say that Jef Davis will reign over us before three months but I dont believe it yet. Arkansaw has had the distemper but is getting better. Johny says tell Pa that he is well and wants to see you. Beny says that he wants Pa to come home that he wants to see him. Becca says tell him that she is a good girl and wants to see him and wants to know how he is getting along, and so do I with the childrens good night kiss and love to you, and with my best wishes and love for you. you may consider a kiss from me this Sunday night. I will close. may God take care of you dear one,
Yours truly Emily Wiley

1. Emily is approximately 5 months pregnant at this writing.
2. Willie is at a school for the blind in St. Louis.

St. Louis Missouri¹
March 15th 1863

My Dear Husband

Johny and I got here safe and sound on Friday morning at 1/2 3 in morning we had some delay on account of breakdown on trains we stopped 2 hours at Oden and about 2 hours about 15 miles from river they had to build a road around a broke down train we stopped at Everett house and could neither get room nor bed so we set up until morning that tall man that stays in the hall and rings the bell when any person starts down to eat told me that if I would take the coach that belongs to the hotel it would cost me the least of any other way I took it and when I got out he charged me 1,50, rather tall I thought for cheap. When I got into the front door heard two or three saying Oh Willie your ma has come found him in the room with 6 women and two little girls he was enjoying himself with them his general health is very good he can see some better than when he left home but his eyes does not look any better than they did when he left home but the Dr. says they are better. When I was dressing this morning I went by him he says ² ma are you going to ware a white dress to church to day after while when [I] got my dress on he said my dress was dark directly Sally went by he says Sally you have a green dress on to day so you see that he has improved some he and Susy Worthing (the little girl from Carbondale) are great friends and seem to be pals with the other patients Will the young man started home this afternoon they all seemed very sorry to part with him. 8 or 10 of us went down to the Court house yesturday and went up on the top was nearly tired out when we got back but we all went to St. Josephs church staid about an hour could not get a seet and when he commence preaching he did it up in Lattin could not understand got tired of standing and left Willie said he was preaching about Franklin Avenue they all dipped there fingers in the holy water as they came in Johny said they aught to have washed before they came there When we first started out to take a walk Johny got after a pig and tried to run it in that big pond as we went along by a house there was a little dog laying by the door he jumped at it and the little dog jumped up barked at him and made him jump in earnest he does not know how to see all the sights will have to quit thes girls and women keep up such a talking that cant think so good by hope will get a letter from you soon wish you was here take good care of yourself
Emily Wiley

1. Letter written from school for the blind.
2. Why.

Makanda Ills
Apr 17th 1863

My Dear Husband

This is a beautiful morning thought would write you a few lines although have nothing of importance to write. We are all well The little ones are out at play Mother is yet here sewing away she and I went up to Mr. Dickensons yesturday and I was going to get her to go over to Mr. Millers today but she has a bile and it hurts her to walk and we gave it out I did not care much about it this morning as my back hurts. Hugh Miller and Babcock were both wounded in a skirmish in Tennessee and have both since died. We had a nice rain this week which we began to need It makes the wheat and the clover look nice and the oats to come up Maxfield was hauling the rails and wood off of the field yesturday, and is to day fixing fence, wants to commence plowing over there tomorrow, You said that you expected to have to stay at Helena untill Vixburg was taken I think from present propects that will be some time yet think they have almost abandoned the idea of takeing now, Our fleet have had to withdraw from Charleston so I see by yesturdays paper perhaps it is only to get ready to attack it with redouble viger, hope they may take it soon, It will be so warm in a few months more that our troops in the south cannot do much if anything I am makeing Beny a little pr pts with pockets and a little round-about for this summer he is very proud of them, Our Plumb Cherrie and Pear trees are very full of bloom, our onions look nice, Willie's last letter was the 9th of this month, said his eyes were about the same as when I left him I hope to get a letter from him and you also to day or tomorrow at farthest, this is the third one I have rote you since I got one send to the office every day but it does not do much good as yet Dreamed last night of seeing you so plain, Oh how I wish it had not been a dream take good care of yourself and maby it will come true some time not far distant, May God bless you always

My love to you and believe me yours truly and sincerely

Emily Wiley

Makanda Ills
Apr 19th 1863

My Dear Husband

Yours of the 9th came to hand was very glad to learn that you was well also one from Willie of the 16 saying that his eyes wer a great deal better, he had had some fever the night before but thought it was cold that he was takeing The little girl that had the small pox was getting better I would not be surprised if it was the Varoloid¹ that he was taken instead of cold, he seemed to be in good spirits when he wrote and sent some word to all of them he seems very anxious to see Beny he says if I cant send him no other way to send him by Express or in a letter, Says he has had but one letter from Father since I left there, think the little fellow would like to hear often from you, he says Becca may come along with Beny and talk duck for them, and Johny may stay at home and pick cornstalks and catch moles for a liveing, Johny says tell pa he wants him to send him his Photograph when you get them taken wish you would have a dozen taken for the children will all want one (if they are good) and the rest of the folks wants one. And I know that I want one for it seems to me sometimes if I could only see you dont know what I would do wheather would eat you or kiss you, or what I would do. You said that you had sent out that morning 500 men to whip the rebels I wish they could only whip all of them and I would not care how soon, so you could all get to come home and stay there but I am afraid that before this rebellion is put down there will be a great many innocent lives lost and a great deal of blood shed I see by yesturdays paper that our fleet has been repulsed at Charleston, and that there is not much doing at Vicksburg also that there has been a riot at Anna last Wednesday on account of the officers takeing two diserters they were obliged to give up the men and took the officers arms expect you have saw the same in the papers before this time I have not heard any of the particulars expect some of them up to day for mother then can learn more about it hope Gen Ammen will attend to them soon the KGC² are getting pretty numerous as I have lately heard that some of our neighbours belong Tilly and Anna have been to Sunday school and Beccys tongue runs like a clatter mill. Here comes Father

After dinner. Father and Mother have gone home Becca & Beny had to go a piece with them for a ride. Father says the riot was got up by the diserters there was some 40 of them The officer came out amongst them and told them to take the two boys that he had if they wanted them and to keep them untill he sent after them Daniel some stranger and Ashly went where they wer and told them it would not do for them to make any

1. Variola; smallpox.

2. Knights of the Golden Circle; secret pro-Southern organization

noise about it and there was not any thing more done then The officer had got an old man by the name of Welch (he lives in bottom on Greens land) to help him bring those two men up that night as he went home he was shot and his horse and both killed when he was nearly to the dig hill there was about 20 followed him part of the way did not learn there names Father says he does not care how soon the soldiers comes and takes every last one of them and give them what they deserve Father says all our folks down there are well the last letter that May got Tom was not very well have you heard from him When Willie wrote he said Mr. Richard was wanting some of his board mony very bad Father said he was going to express some this week to some men in St Louis he would send them 25\$ for me and they could give it to Willie, for him I wrote Willie to take a receipt I will pay Father when I get some also some other that I got Father told me he was going to send Willie ten dollars for his own (before I said anything about getting him to send the other) to get him any thing that he needed he wanted to know what he did need I told him a summer coat and pr shoes I did not know of anything else just now. said that he would get one of those men to go with him and pick them out for him Father made us a lot of presents to day when he came up. he gave Tilly a muslin dress me one and a shambra gingham for every day but think I will make it for a better dress Becca two muslin dresses, twelve yds fine bleached muslin me two pr stockings Tilly one Anna one some thread buttons and a bolt of brown sheeting (sixteen dollars per bolt he did not tell the price of the rest of the things, Dont you think they wer nice presents? The trees came friday but was not exactly what was directed there was only 12 Red Astrieans and 60 or 65 Romanites and some Cartherage trees them and the Romanites wer mixed to gather in one bundle and do not know the number of either kind finished setting them out last evening. We had quite a storm last night the first this spring and a very heavy rain every thing looks nice to day the sun is shineing bright the oats are comeing up the Clover and Wheat looks nice and green The seedling apple trees are in bloom and the forest trees begin to look green the red bud and dogwood are in bloom Mother and I went over to Mr. Millers yesturday I was quite tired last night but do not feel the worse of it to day. Mrs Millers eyes are quite sore yet Bob said he was comeing over in morning to set in for work do not think I can rent any of the ground it has got so late cannot hear of any person that wants to rent I will stop for the want of something to write mother told me when I commenced this that she wished to be remembered to you that she often thought of writing to you but that it was such hard work for her to write that she had not done if but that she thought of you often when she lay down at night and when she woke in the morning

My love to you and a kiss from the little ones Good by
 dear one To B L Wiley Yours truly Emily Wiley

Makanda Ills
Apr 26th 1863

My Dear Husband

This is Sunday evening and we are all well, It rained all forenoon stopped about noon but is yet cloudy I red the paper this morning then took a good nap as did Tilly and the rest of the children got up it was time to get dinner it over, I went over in the north fields they have about two days more plowing over there think they can commence planting by Thursday if they have no bad luck or rain, We just got the news that Price had Cape Giradeau it is said that he has a force of 15,000 expect it is exagerated some we have heard canonaiding there to day it commenced about 10 AM and quit 3 1/4 PM that is what seemed to be the general engagement the Copperheads¹ are rejoicing at a great rate. There may be some of them through here before morning I shall prepare as well as I can before laying down, They organized a Union League at our house on Friday night last there was 26 here I would have rote for your advice but there would not have been time for me to have got an answer from you and knowing your principals thought that you would not object, they are going to have a call meeting tomorrow night do not know where they are going to meet, it is getting late must go and milk children all abed Maggy has come over she and Tilly are talking at a great rate The KGC meet at the school house sometimes and sometimes at other places they boast of haveing from two to three hundred men, I think our men are getting excited rather much if they have taken the Cape think it is only a raid for horses and provisions They have been boasting about here that they was going to have Jeff Thompson in here before long to help them, Our side say if they give them 48 hours they will try and meet them Capt Evins is going to send tomorrow for arms and amunition enough of this without I know more about it I dont feel very much frightened untill we hear more certain

If you send me any mony I think it would be the safest to send it to Anna to father for you know what our post master is Do you get the papers now, Gen Grant and 15 boats have run by Vixburg and are now at Carthage where Grant has his head quarters, Till is singing and playing John Brown yesturdays paper says that the soldiers at Jonesboro have sent 23 of the citizens to Columbus I heard yesturday evening that Mr Ashly Mr Roberts and some two or three others had been sent below the lines Mr Roberts was taken in irons he seems to be Capt here is the names given in the paper perhaps you have saw them by this time, Capt JA Roberts, SA McKinny, CA Rislaben, JM Albright, A Minister, Robert Firestone, Richard Len White, Richard Parrish, TA Brown, RM Nimo, WC Pender, LW Ashly, JM

1. Northerners sympathetic to the South.

Brisben, J Randolph MD, KH McElhenny, RD Simson, John Harwood,
GW Price, Alex Cruse, CE McKinny, TJ Kellogg, Jos J Provo, JT
Clemens, I have heard of others but do not know for certain
if there is any more it is bed time so good night wish you
happy dreams with a kiss from the little ones and me also if I
could write me often I will write again in a few days
Yours truly Emily Wiley

morning

all is well had a good nights sleep

Makanda Ills
May 1st 1863

My Dear Husband

Yours of the 24th came to hand yesturday was glad to hear that you was well, you said that perhaps they would send [you home], you know not how well I should like to have you here, but would be very sorry if they should send you home in disgrace for I know that it was the least of your intentions to do wrong and it looks like you done everything that you could to find out about it while at home, hope it will all be right yet, let me hear about it as soon as you find out, I had a letter from Willie this week his health was good and said that his eyes wer improving slowly and I do hope they may continue to improve for sometimes when get to thinking about them it seems to me that I can hardly stand it he has been there now nearly three months, We are all well commenced planting corn yesturday between three and four, Tilly Maggy and Johny went out to help they are all out again to day Becca and I has done up the work and are going to get dinner it makes me very tired but think I will [get] over it That was all a big scare about Cape Girardeau we whipped them out and got the place, I have not got the particulars I have not heard nothing deffinite from Jonesboro since I last wrote you, will quit have a chance to send my letter by John Shearer he is going by

good by yours sincerely
Emily Wiley

Makanda Ills
May 4th 1863

My Dear Husband

This is a nice morning and we are all well have not heard from Willie since I last wrote the 1st of May still planting corn will finish the field to where it was plowed last fall, by noon to day I got a bush[ell] cotton seed they will commence plowing for that this afternoon thought would plant a small patch and try what luck would have with it Father and Mother Wiley came up Friday afternoon are going to start up north this afternoon to spend the summer, they packed up and are taking all with them. Father says he is old and the times are rather squally down at Anna for him he says the soldiers are still arresting citizens and deserters almost every day he says some of the citizens were conserved in that first muss and that the soldiers found about 40 rounds of amunition for 100 men, hid at Jonesboro thinks it was at one of the Fricks said could not find out the strait of it although he lived there for the soldiers did not tell and the citizens would not if they [k]new, There was also a lot of whiskey and some amunition found on this side of river, if Marmaduke had got the Cape some of them would have been very glad and helped him all they could and we would have suffered. Thank goodness he didn't but got badly whipped I tell you it makes some of there feathers fall Uncle Willis and family have gone some place some say to report to Burnside at Cincinatti and others think they have gone on a visit that they have been talking of taking all winter he was under arrest for a while. Col Willard went to Chicago on business and had not come back the last I heard Dr. Goodman rented there house and moved into Uncles to keep it while he was gone, Col Nimnings Regiment has been put in another and he Tom and McAellehenny came home the day before Father came up have not heard anything particular from them. Do you get the Chicago Tribune if you do you know almost as much that is going on down there as I do, Grandma Willard was almost crazy for a few days but the Col went in to see her and reconciled her some. she neither eat nor sleep any Grandma Wiley said he read her something off of paper that reconciled her do not know what it was but she is feeling better now John drops corn like a good boy and seems very willing to help all he can he gets up early in morning to help milk and get his breakfast soas to be ready Bec and Beny are good children too and would like to see you if they could. I must write Willie this morning before have to get dinner so will quit for this time hoping to soon hear from you again my love and best wishes to you

yours truly and forever Emily Wiley

Jonesboro Illi
May 26th [1863]

My Dear Husband

Your kind letter came to hand a few minutes ago by Mr. Scurlock I wanted to here from you so bad that I could not keep from crying when I read your letter I was glad to hear that you was well and was getting along very well it found us boath very well Willie soon dispatched one of those nice apples he said that Pa sent them. Mr Scurlock got home this morning but his trunk did not come up till this afternoon and the letter was in it. I sent Nany and Willie down directly that he came home to see if he had seen you he said that you were well and that he had a letter at the river for me. We have had but one light shower of rain since you left the yards are very dry I do not think they will do very well if we do not have some before long I have not had any peas yet Mrs Scurlock had amess last Monday I have not got to set any tomatoes out yet I expect that I will have to set them out if it is dry, and water them. Mr Sours has raised his house this week Emily Macintire and Nancy Hacker are both getting better Mr Fricks child is no better I do not hear of any new cases of sickness old man Finches wife started this morning for Tennessee and some of the rest of them but I do not know which Willie hoed the corn for me yesturday and the potatoes in the garden. I do not know any more news oh yes, some person broke in Shies house the other night when he was gone and took out about twenty five dollars worth bead clothes and clothing that he had there in his shop

Willie is a good boy and is a great deal of company but still it is very lonesome it seems to me like you had been gone a month I do not know what I will do before 5 weeks longer do write soon and often I kissed Willie for you when I got that far in your letter. Father picked up a letter in the store of yours that had not been opened I expect that you had overlooked it I oapened it it was from DD Mattice there was a letter inside of it that he wanted you to direct to the secretary of the Grand Lodge he said that he did not know how and that you did do you want me to forward it to you I would have wrote yesturday but I wanted to here from you first so Good by I remain yours Emily Wiley

PS Mr Fricks child died yesturday morning but I did not hear of it till last night Serena and Catharine came over and they told me I got up this morning before sun up it is the second time since you left Catharine waked me. Willie is up and at play

as ever yours E

Makanda Ills
May 29th 1863

My Dear Husband

I have not any news to write this morning but thought that we wer all well I feel a great deal better than did the first of week in a few days will be all right again here is a letter that got from Willie yesturday See by yesturdays paper that Vicksburg is not ours yet, but hope it will be soon We have had a nice shower since last wrote you, think it will do a good deal of good Our swarm of beess that swarmed a working real nice, hope they will do some good Mother came up the other day she is going home to day said they wer all well when she left but Grandma she has not been well since they arrested Uncle, but is a great deal better than she was, old man Cruses wife that lived up there by us died the first of week, Uncle was arrested but was soon discharged without any bill being found several that had been taken to Cincinatti came back the day mother came up others wer expected in a few days, We have about 75 sweet potatoes plants out are going to put out a few cabbage this evening you ought to see this rose that runs over the bedroom door this morning it is a perfect wreath of roses, Willie told Maxfield before he left that you lent one of the sythes do you know who it was to will need them before long but dont think our clover is quit[el] as heavy as last year our wheat has commenced heading out Johny has started to school he likes it very well, the other children is keeping a perfect storm Tilly sends her love to you mother wishes to be remembered to you, and here is all my love for you wish you good success in your trials
yours truly
Emily Wiley

St Louis Mo, May 26th 1863

My beloved and esteemed mother

I have just received two letters from you dated the 18th and 21st and I was glad to hear that you were all well and doing well. I have nothing new to write to you. my general health is good. there is not much change since I wrote you last in my eyes at a distance I can see better with my right eye. but can see objects close with my left eye the best. I asked the Dr. a few days since how long I would have to stay and he said he could not tell, tell father when you write to him that he must write to me-- the last I heard from him was that he was ordered to Memphis, and I have heard nothing further from him-- you wrote to me you was gowing to send me a vest by Jesse Morgan if you should do so pleas send me my white pants as it is now getting verry warm, nothing unusual with me, there is ten or twelve boarders here now, I would like exceeding well to see you here, and Anney and Benny with you, the weather is verry dry and warm here, and has been for some time, Stuart and Hester is still here yet. There is also two blind men here. good news from Vicksburgh, all of which you will hear, nothing more at present but remain your affectionate

Wm W. Wiley

Makanda Ills
Apr 7th 1864

My Dear Husband

Yours of the 1st came to hand yesturday was glad to hear that you was well you did not stop as I saw, wished you had we are all well This is a nice morning Maxfield is finishing the orchard this morning Mr Sheppard is hauling rails Jo is cutting corn stalks we have had plenty of rain Matilda is at Carbondale comeing home to day Johny is jobbing around Anna is hemming Willies shirts and Beny is helping Johny, Dannie is a sleep, wish you would get him a little pair of shoes think this is about the right length¹ get them high in the instep dont get them any shorter than this I am going to try and finish setting out my onions to day Pickwicks have a little boy Have you heard from the Gov have you heard from Jacksonville, Wish you would write me all the news and when are you comeing up My love to you

Yours truly Emily Wiley

P.S. The melodeon is down there

1. Enclosure in letter: a 3-4 inch swatch of muslin.

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